

ONOMASTICS IN MATEI MILLO'S WORK (THE ROMANIAN THEATRE UP TO ALECSANDRI)

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Abstract

In this article we deal with proper names in Matei Millo's work. Millo calls his heroes in the manner of Alecsandri, when it is said about a banker on the verge of bankruptcy or when speaking about dishonest people; peasants' names are not changed, as they are not ironically treated. The names of the characters manage to delineate their characterization in a synthetic and relevant way.

Key words: *onomastics, proper names, comedy, character, irony*

Résumé:

Dans ce travail on a essayé de présenter l'onomastique de Matei Millo. Il recherche ses héros à la manière d' Alecsandri, lorsqu'il s'agit d'un banquier qui risque la faillite; lorsqu'il s'agit d'hommes malhonnêtes; les paysans ne changent pas de nom, parce que l'auteur ne les traite pas de manière ironique, mais avec sympathie. Le nom de personnages contribue de manière synthétique à leur caractérisation.

Mots-clés: *onomastique, nom propre, comédie, personnage, ironie*

Matei Millo was a Romanian performer and playwright. Among the roles that ensured his popularity are the travesti roles *Chirița*, *Mama Anghelușa* (*Mother Anghelusa*), *Baba Hârca* (*The Beldam*), *Ciubăr* (*The Small Vat*) in *Despot –Vodă* (*Prince Despot*), *Barbu Lăutaru* (*Barbu the Fiddler*) by Alecsandri, Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare, Sancho Panza in *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, a.s.o.

Millo calls his heroes in the manner of Alecsandri: *Affifescu* (*the penniless*), when it is said about a banker on the verge of bankruptcy, baron *Pungașevschi* ('*pungas*' meaning '*lurcher*', '*cozener*', '*charlatan*'), countess *Hoățancovici* ('*hoăță*' means '*thief*'), when speaking about dishonest people; *Coțcarovici* ('*cotcar*' means '*slyboots*'), *Flușturache* ('*flu(s)tura*' means '*to flutter*') when showing unreliability, lability¹. The only way to define the characters is the language, also visibly influenced by Alecsandri. The old boyar uses Graecisms and Turkisms, the newfangled youngster uses 'the frenchified words'. The peasants are always seen with sympathy, their names are not changed, as they are not ironically treated. Their names are Ichim, Florica, Lina and they speak a pure rural idiom without any grimace or deformity. Sometimes, Millo commits stylistic anachronisms, as for example, in his first play, *Sărbătoarea ostășească* (*The Soldierly Celebration*) where Stephen the Great employs some neologies: 'enthusiasm', 'organ', 'feelings', non extant words in the fifteenth century Romanian vocabulary.

When he satirizes, Millo highly emphasizes the negative features, throwing up slap-stick comedy characters similar to those used in the puppeteers' scenes performed

¹ Mihai Florea, *Matei Millo*, București, Editura Meridiane, 1966, p. 185.

amid the fairs of Falticeni and Iasi or in the Parisian vaudeville theatres. Sometimes he puts in his characters' mouth some remarks that sound familiar for their later usage in Caragiale's comedies². A character from *Prăpastiile Bucureștiului* (*Bucharest's Precipices*) whereby Millo banter the young men that speak incomprehensible double Dutch, declares his love: 'Miss, the most verbal of my emotions, with whom my anima (i.e. 'soul') deeply affected in an ethereal equilibrium whose vertical sustained by a criterion of burning throbs attaches with the most rakish and increasing excitement, ... of my anima that you are belle, supra-belle over all the belles of the most beautiful belles...'

Without any further inquiry, Millo is not one of Caragiale's forerunners. The already extant types from that era are mirrored in most writers' creations; and so we discover these few common elements in both of them, but treated with extremely different artistic means. In the history of our dramatic literature, Matei Millo can't be placed next to Caragiale; his creation belongs to the mid-level comedy of Negruzzi, and form together the copper link which joints the two golden rings: V. Alecsandri and I.L. Caragiale.

Some of the characters from *Sărbarea ostășască* (*The Soldierly Celebration*) are taken from 'the terrestrial militia' that followed up 'The Organic Regulations' and the others [characters] are great past historical personalities, like Stephen the Great and Hetman Arbore both walking as 'spirits'.

In the play called *Nișorescu*, as much as in *Însurăteii* (*The Newlyweds*), Alecsandri's influence on Millo is obvious. Some situations and characters, as the couple Nișorescu – Volcica, recall Lunătescu and damsel Cati from *Iași în carnaval*. The type of *Chirița* thrown up by Alecsandri will be reverted in a new version by Millo twenty-thirty years later. He appropriates Alecsandri's way to feature some characters or satirize certain ridiculous aspects under which he portrays cosmopolitan landlords and the bourgeoisie avid of ranks.

In front of the central characters such as Alecu (Stan) in *Însurăteii* (*The Newlyweds*) or Lăzărilă in *Tuzu-calicul* (*The Greedy*) representing young boyars the author's satirical tilt turns into sympathy. The leniency takes the place of the critical spirit; such pink characters are false, in building them Millo distorts reality using a figment recipe dominated by understanding and reconciliation.

The central figure of the operetta *Baba Hârca* (*The Beldam*) is *Hârca* (*The Grimalkin*), a picturesque character chosen from the ranks of gypsy slaves; with her comes another gypsy, Chiosa. The author looks at them with sympathy and gives both the lead in wearing comic. Millo doesn't see them as an opportunity for mockery and irony, on the contrary he depicts them to the public as some people loving freedom and not as some beings condemned to a life of eternal slavery³.

Viorica, representing a young peasant from the mountains, naïve, pure and sincere, is portrayed with that purity peculiar to the simple girls. She will tie up to Vlad only through the marriage laws and she turns down her other fiancé, the wealthy old Bârzu, understanding how unconjugal he would have been to her.

Starting from an older, yet not outmoded type, *Chirita*, created by Alecsandri, he depicts it in new conditions. Millo's *Chirița* got so highly out of ruck: she reached a great 'sword bearer woman', 'great lady elite'⁴. Proportionally with the rise in the

² Mihai Florea, 1966, p. 186.

³ Mihai Florea, 1966, p. 164.

⁴ Mihai Florea, 1966, p. 172.

hierarchy, have also increased her arrogance, conceit, contempt for ordinary people and the belief in her noble bloodline. *Chirița's* metamorphosis also included other members of the family. *Guliță*, the dullard son of his mummy, growing up and being forced to his own political 'concept' reached 'an anarchist'⁵.

The satirized characters equally belong to the boyar class and to the arriviste strata of the bourgeoisie. The slum nobleman, the young boyar Ianache in *Franțuzitele* ('The Frenchified- Women') is a wealthy bourgeois, determined to settle his welfare on a moral basis that should not be vexed nor battered by the fashions and customs of 'the manors' which they imitate and where his daughters, Elenca and Luxandra, tend to get out of ruck. The bon-ton, the teas, their salon and sentimental show-offs, heroics and ridiculous frenchified language.

The person names could be classified in this way:

Baba Hârca (Baba Hârca, Millo) - the tagster is a pejorative popular form having the following semantic values: 1. the skull of a dead human or animal; 2. an old, ugly and wicked lady; scratch cat; harridan; # *The Beldam* imagined like a bitchy, old shrew; the hag. The tagster comes from the Ukrainian *hykra*⁶. In the Romanian mythology she is the great sorceress who congeals the waters and alights the stars from the sky, although herself lives in an ordinary nook. The fairy-tales often present her in a sapient aspect, she usefully advises on strategy some honest lads gone to the mat. Therefore, she is also a beneficial character with preferential actions.

Bârzu (*The Bespeckled*) (Baba Hârca, Millo) comes from the Bulgarian *barzo*, cf. n. top *Bârzul*⁷ (*the bespeckled/spotted*).

Chiosa (Baba Hârca, Millo) is a gypsy man, Lascu's servant < the Turkish: *kose*, the Bulgarian *kiose*- 'glabrous, beardless'⁸.

Creangă (meaning 'branch') (Două femei, Millo) comes from *creangă*⁹.

Lady Saftica (Două femei, Millo) is a derivative from the root word *safta* (*safta*- handsel) and the suffix *-ica* (-ics).

Gânju Păduraru (Baba Hârca, Millo) comes from *gânj* (*loop*) 'a wicker scorched in the fire and pretzel shaped'¹⁰. *Păduraru* (the forester) is a preter-name changed into a surname, coming from his job's name; it renders the appellative *pădurar* translated *forester, woodman*¹¹.

Lascu (Baba Hârca, Millo) is an alternative for Lazar- *Lazarus* that reproduces an old Jewish Theophilus name *Eleazar* which means 'Elohim has helped', serving to express the parents' gratitude when a son was born. Rendered in the Greek ... and the Latin *Lazarus*, the name, so common in many languages today, is used with various significations 'poor, beggar, ragged, lazar'¹².

Martin (Două femei, Millo) is considered a derivative of March. But, even if

⁵ Mihai Florea, 1966, p. 173.

⁶ See *Dicționarul limbii române moderne (DLMR)*, sub conducerea lui D. Macrea, Editura Academiei, 1958, p. 362.

⁷ Iorgu Iordan, *Dicționar al numelor de familie românești (DNFR)*, București, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1983, p. 66.

⁸ Alexandru Graur, *Nume de persoane (NP)*, București, Editura Științifică, 1965, p. 71

⁹ Iorgu Iordan, 1983, p. 156.

¹⁰ Iorgu Iordan, 1983, p. 275.

¹¹ Iorgu Iordan, 1983, p. 357.

¹² See Christian Ionescu, *Mică enciclopedie onomastică (MEO)*, București, Editura Enciclopedică Română, 1975, p. 187.

the two words are not properly dependent yet they are akin to each other: both the name of the person and the name of the third month are derived from the stem *Mart-*, from *Mars*, *Martis*. The well-known god of war, *Marte* was primarily a deity of the Sabines being a protector of the agriculture and animals. The warrior tasks that make him Ares' correspondent come later and belong to the Classic Era. His osmosis with spring and fertility is still kept today. The month when the Romans celebrated Juno's son got the name of its god, *martius(mensis)*- 'the month of Mars' this old adjectival form being kept in the present- day modern languages. The Romanian 'marti' has approximately the same origin: in the world this day of the week is placed under the auspices of Mars and was called *dies Martis* 'the day of Mars'. *Martinus* is a Roman cognomen which entered our language as *Martin* via Greek and Slavic¹³.

Tinca (Două femei, Millo) is a hypocoristic form for *Catinca* (coming from *Ecaterina*.)

Viorica (Baba Hârca, Millo), Ganju's daughter is the embodiment of rural moral purity. Viorica is a representative Romanian forename and an exclusive achievement of our onomatology. The Latin *viola* (*violet*) became the Romanian *vioara* (*violin*) also involving the function of the feminine name. The parallelism drawn between the Romanian and the western classic Romance languages in the field of the common words and of onomatology (onomastics) goes even further: for instance, the Italian word *viola* gave the diminutive *violetta* and the proper name *Viola* gave *Violetta*- identical with the Romanian proper name where the *violet* is derived from *violin* and *Viorica* from *Violin*¹⁴.

Zoița (Însurăței, Millo) is the grocer's daughter, endowed with the longing and toffishness of the lordliness after having experienced – at the same time as the impact of the latheman Stan's imprisonment – the superiority of the collective where she had seen Stan living and enjoying living. Zoița is a diminutive derived from *Zoe* and the suffix *-itica*. *Zoe* reproduces the Greek name *Zon* translated 'life' and preferred to the Hebraic *Eva-Eve*¹⁵. *Zoitica* comes from *Zoita* and the suffix *-ica*.

The names of the characters manage, for the most part, to delineate their characterization in a synthetic and compendious way. The absolute majority of these persons' names from the previously studied works can be reached in terms of their origin and evolution. The linguistic scenery of the above mentioned epoch is characterized by the modern lexical element that becomes wider, consequent on the social, political and cultural orientation towards the Roman Occident, mostly the French, to the detriment of the Greek and Turkish element.

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¹³ Christian Ionescu, 1975, p. 206.

¹⁴ Christian Ionescu, 1975, p. 287.

¹⁵ Christian Ionescu, 1975, p. 295.

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****Primii noștri dramaturgi*, ediție îngrijită de Al. Niculescu, București, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1960.